

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION NOTES

Eisenhower West Small Area Plan Work Session

Tuesday, March 24, 2015 | 7:00 pm | City Council Chambers

Staff and Mindy Lyle, Planning Commissioner and Chair of the Eisenhower West Steering Committee, gave an update to the City Council on the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan at a work session on March 24th. The update was also an opportunity to check in with the City Council before proceeding with more detailed analysis work and drafting of the plan in the spring and summer. Generally, the City Council viewed the Plan as heading in the right direction.

1 OVERALL CONCEPT OF A GREAT STREET

- Eisenhower West as a Great Street is a strong vision
- Straightening Eisenhower Avenue will make redevelopment of parcels near the Metro more attractive; WMATA supports this idea
- Heights are appropriate for the area
- Community engagement process has been collaborative, positive, and visionary
- Discourage the expansion of Norfolk-Southern operations

2 FLEX ZONE (INCLUDING INDUSTRIAL STUDY OVERVIEW)

- The industrial study is helpful as it demonstrates that most uses in the industrial zone are not industrial.
- The flex zone could create opportunities to live and work in the same location
- In maintaining some flex uses, be cautious about protecting neighborhoods and quality of life
- If we are promoting mixed use in the flex zone, how do we make sure we are mitigating different uses adjacent to one another? Staff can research SUP complaint cases for insights into potential conflicts
- The concept plan shows a lot of residential with some flex uses west of Van Dorn, the Steering Committee supports this because of the proximity to Metro and the future potential of the adjacent Smoot Lumber site in Fairfax County
- Be cautious of not removing so much of the existing flex/light industrial that it does not grow more organically into a mixed use neighborhood

3 SCHOOLS & PARKS

- There is a need for a school on the West End, staff will bring options to the Steering Committee and the public for feedback
- The Virginia Paving site will not be redeveloped in the near term; A park might not be needed there; Staff is working on an option that works for everyone
- Once you show a park on a plan, people will become wedded to it, even if the plan is flexible
- The highest and best use for each site is desirable; staff needs to investigate whether and where parks are desired in the plan area
- Look at Farragut Square and Rittenhouse Square as examples of parks in denser, urban areas

4 CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION

- How can we handle traffic on Eisenhower Avenue and Van Dorn Street? Staff is collaborating with Fairfax County on regional traffic issues and looking at this area through the transportation study; Staff will return to City Council with some solutions
- A Great Street should have high capacity transit, potentially opening up the conversation of moving Corridor B from Duke Street to Eisenhower Avenue
- Right of way exists along Eisenhower Ave for BRT
- Transit should come first and development will follow
- Connectivity and creating a street grid is equally important to transit options

5 IMPLEMENTATION

- How do we make this happen? Prioritize and phase the plan
- How do you present a flexible plan with enough detail for City Council to consider adoption? The plan might have more words and less images with guidelines or principles for each neighborhood, maybe similar to Potomac Yard
- “Temporary” uses like big box retail might not actually be temporary; the plan can include guidelines so as not to preclude denser development that might occur after big box sites are redeveloped (i.e., parking guidelines)
- More discussion on incentives for implementing this plan is needed
- What is the “Eisenhower West” zone?
- This should be called a “draft plan” instead of a “plan”

6 ELEMENTS TO STUDY FURTHER

- Street grid/connectivity
- School site
- Multimodal transit beyond BRT (bikes, peds)
- Trolley expansion to the West End
- High capacity transit on Eisenhower Avenue
- Environmental opportunities: energy, stormwater, sustainability
- Specific proposals for effective zoning tools
- Financial incentives
- Mitigating the impact of flex uses